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Chairman: Mr. Margarian (Vice-Chairman) ..... (Armenia)

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08-53818 (E)

In the absence of Mr. Majoor (Netherlands), Mr. Margarian (Armenia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 55: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/63/133)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/63/183 and A/63/184)

(c) Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons: Second World Assembly on Ageing (*continued*) (A/63/95)

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(e) Review and appraisal of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons (*continued*) (A/63/183)

1. **Ms. Péan Mevs** (Haiti) considered that, in a world rocked by crises, social programmes should be expanded in order to ensure that socially vulnerable categories were not excluded. In Haiti, successive hurricanes had thwarted the efforts of the Government, exacerbated the economic situation of the country and hindered the resumption of social reconstruction but, given the vital importance of education, a programme for school reconstruction had been set up, as a result of which classes had resumed at the start of the school year. The Haitian Government had also released 90 million gourdes, the management of which would be entrusted to the Economic and Social Assistance Fund.

2. Over half of the families in Haiti were single-parent families, and large numbers of women brought up their children on their own. There was, however, a poverty alleviation programme, and legislative measures were planned to ensure that men assumed their parental responsibilities.

3. The economic, food and oil crises, low wages and natural disasters had an impact on the living conditions of older persons, who were increasingly numerous. Although they were generally cared for by relatives and could seek help from the Social Assistance Fund, she acknowledged that the authorities concerned should do more. The Family Wellness Association facilitated intergenerational meetings with the focus on older persons and involving mentoring, social assistance and leisure programmes.

4. The Government was preparing the final version of a national policy document on disabilities and had signed a protocol of agreement with the United Nations Population Fund with a view to strengthening the intervention capacities of the State with respect to the integration of disabled persons. The document provided for the publication of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons and its translation into Creole.

5. Lastly, her Government wished to ensure the harmonization of social policies and thereby to reduce the vulnerability of marginal groups, a process that required the ongoing support of the international community. In that connection, she urged donors to fulfil their promises.

6. **Ms. Al-Marzouqi** (United Arab Emirates) said that the social situation of over half the population of the world prevented it from living in dignity as it was facing major problems such as poverty, disease, unemployment, illiteracy, organized crime and conflicts. She commended the efforts of the United Nations in the field of social development and urged the international community to follow up all the conferences that had taken place and to honour the commitments made.

7. Her country was trying to improve the standard of living of its population by allocating all the financial and human resources necessary for that purpose and by becoming truly involved in world partnerships so as to build a society in which everyone enjoyed the benefits of prosperity, security and peace. According to social development indicators, the income of individuals was steadily increasing together with expenditure by the State on medical and educational services. Illiteracy was decreasing, and women (who currently constituted 59 per cent of the employment force and held four ministerial portfolios) were increasingly taking part in the process of decision-making. An initial programme of work had been launched to achieve sustainable development and attain a decent standard of living.

8. Her country offered free education at all levels in order to provide young people with work skills and

was adapting its national curricula to developments in the labour market. At the international level, thanks to the Dubai Initiative and in partnership with international bodies, over 4 million children had been enrolled in schools in 14 countries in Africa, South Asia and the Middle East.

9. The health services were of a very high standard and had achieved a significant reduction in child mortality and the total elimination of many childhood diseases, and had brought malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis under control. At the international level, the United Arab Emirates had launched the "Noor Dubai" initiative, which was designed to treat millions of people suffering from eye diseases, particularly in Africa and Asia.

10. Her Government had adopted laws to protect human rights: it prohibited the participation of children in camel racing and had criminalized human trafficking. It had regulated the working hours of household employees and improved their working conditions. It had created a national committee against human trafficking and a human rights association. In addition, it provided care for people with special needs and had acceded to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol.

11. She drew attention to the special interest taken in the treatment of offenders and to the creation of special centres which provided training to enable them to reintegrate into society.

12. Her Government was also providing service centres for older persons in remote areas.

13. In conclusion, she expressed the hope that the current discussions would induce the international community to keep the promises made with a view to improving the humanitarian and social situation of all peoples.

14. **Ms. Sow** (Senegal) said that the serious economic crisis following the soaring oil and food prices, as well as the harmful effects of climate change, were likely to jeopardize the efforts made by the poor countries and prevent them from attaining the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. The international community should make greater efforts and give effect to the promises made.

15. To contend with the food crisis, Senegal had waged a major agricultural offensive for food and abundance and had adopted social development and solidarity policies so as effectively to contend with maternal and child mortality. Legislation was in place designed to make it possible for children to enjoy healthy development, a satisfactory nutritional status and protection to enable them to develop their intellectual and mental faculties and their psycho-motor skills. The Government was also combating sexist stereotypes and sociocultural prejudices with a view to enabling women to play their role to the full and to participate effectively in development and in decision-making. It promoted the retention of girls in school and access by women to basic social services.

16. Although poor older persons were generally looked after by relatives, the Government had adopted measures to improve the medical services that they used and to promote their retraining and personal development while strengthening the role of the family.

17. In order to protect the rights of disabled persons, improve the safety of their social and vocational environment and facilitate their social integration, the Government had begun to create social rehabilitation centres in which their education could be more effectively provided for.

18. In addition to the adoption of legal arrangements and the creation of numerous appropriate instruments, the Government was seeking to coordinate and promote the prevention and management of risks and disasters, to prevent major industrial accidents and floods and to enhance welfare assistance to vulnerable groups. In that context, it had established a dynamic economic and social policy designed to provide long-term solutions and to consolidate social cohesion and integration in a development perspective. It encouraged a joining of forces and in-depth reform of cooperation machinery for sustainable development.

19. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that the current situation, with its multiple food, energy and financial crises, once again illustrated the importance of the commitments undertaken in Copenhagen in 1995.

20. Most internationally agreed frameworks, including the Millennium Development Goals, provided the guidelines and tools necessary to meet fixed targets in various fields. In order to advance the socio-economic agenda, coordination and cooperation must be strengthened at all levels.

21. Advances had been made in achieving the goals of the World Summit for Social Development, but they

were not equitably distributed. The problems preventing some countries from attaining the necessary level of development must be systematically addressed.

22. His Government, which attached great importance to the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development and other conferences, together with the Millennium Development Goals, was committed to attaining a more equitable social system that would take into account the problems of all stakeholders. In the quest for justice and equality, his Government delivered social services to all regions of the country, in particular the rural areas, where even basic services were often lacking.

23. Governments should adopt initiatives and strategies that reflected national realities and priorities. His own Government's policy was aimed at restoring and rebuilding the country's economic, social and physical infrastructure and, to that end, was mobilizing its meagre human, material and financial resources, particularly young people, in a vast national socio-economic development programme. That policy, which required enormous sacrifices in terms of human and financial resources, had brought about the establishment of a basic infrastructure on which to build further sustainable economic and social development.

24. The Secretary-General's report dealt with disabled persons, an issue which had been taken up as a priority in his Government's development programme with the aim of ensuring the effective participation of disabled persons in all areas by raising their profile in society. The guidelines and programmes for disabled persons were specifically tailored to improve their access to health and rehabilitation services; education and vocational training; employment; devices to improve mobility and communications; and housing for the most vulnerable. His delegation looked forward to considering the Secretary-General's recommendations with regard to the three disability-specific instruments aimed at improving coordination and cooperation for the benefit of disabled persons.

25. **Mr. Olukanni** (Nigeria) said that his country had created the necessary framework for certain initiatives and had implemented the recommendations resulting from the World Summit for Social Development from a people-centred perspective. Under its seven-point programme, his Government had elaborated specific plans to promote economic growth, job creation and improved productivity, while focusing on young people and the goal of providing decent jobs for all, with the support of civil society, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, together with United Nations agencies.

26. Social development also entailed the improvement of the situation of ageing persons, young people and the disabled. His Government had therefore adopted, together with its programme for the integration of destitute persons, a multisectoral approach to poverty reduction and was promoting the right to education, family health, environmental protection, family protection, peace and security. The International Day of Disabled Persons would be celebrated at the national level.

27. His Government's concern over poverty among older persons, especially older women, had led it to incorporate age-related issues into its poverty reduction strategies and development programmes. A national policy on ageing had been prepared and would be submitted to the Federal Executive Council for approval. Day-care centres for older persons had been established in 36 states of the federation, and steps had been taken to provide material assistance to homes for the ageing and to older persons still living in their communities.

28. His Government had adopted a labour standards law to combat exclusion and social discrimination and promote gender equality in the workplace. It had also set up a national poverty eradication programme to unite the Government with local authorities, commercial banks, microlenders, cooperatives and companies in providing loans for the urban and rural poor and for female entrepreneurs.

29. Aware that the development of agriculture and small-scale enterprises could help bring about full employment and decent jobs for all, his Government had set up institutions to promote the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises and sought to encourage an entrepreneurial spirit among youth and women.

30. He expressed concern, however, about the current recession and its potential impact on social development.

31. **Ms. Ochir** (Mongolia) said that, despite the international community's efforts to meet the targets of the United Nations Literacy Decade, global illiteracy

rates were still far too high; that situation was all the more unacceptable in that access to literacy and education was a fundamental right and an essential element of growth and development. In order to survive in the modern world, it was necessary to know how to use information. Her delegation therefore called for increased efforts to improve literacy, closer cooperation among all stakeholders and the adoption of innovative strategies.

32. Aware of the importance of literacy, her Government was committed to achieving, as key elements of its development strategies, universal primary education and the elimination of gender inequities in primary and secondary education.

33. Her Government had also adopted an education sector master plan for 2006-2015 and a literacy programme (2004-2012) containing provisions for summer literacy courses. Through such energetic efforts, the adult literacy rate had been raised to 97.8 per cent.

34. Convinced that education and literacy, including functional literacy, were key to enabling persons to find suitable employment and participate in civil society, her Government was making efforts to improve the quality of education and of vocational and technical training, in particular computer training and the teaching of English.

35. **Mr. Addo** (Ghana) said that Ghana, a developing country that continued to struggle with poverty, had taken economic measures to help youth, in particular by establishing a Youth Fund, which provided soft loans to young people who had studied under apprenticeship programmes, especially in agribusiness. In order to control youth unemployment, the Government had established a national youth employment programme in 2006, through which more than 100,000 young people had found work in various sectors of the economy.

36. Education remained a priority for his Government, which had conferred the right to free, compulsory primary education in its 1992 Constitution. An education trust fund had been established in 1994 to boost investment in education, and a State-funded feeding programme had been set up for primary schoolchildren. The infrastructure of many schools had been improved, and new schools had been built in response to the increased enrolment rates. In some primary and secondary schools, compulsory computer training courses were being provided on a pilot basis.

37. The health infrastructure in Ghana had been much improved. The Government had set up a health insurance system, which had modernized health services throughout the country and was benefiting young people. The Ghana AIDS Commission had intensified its education programmes for youth, focusing on the prevention of HIV/AIDS and managing high-risk behaviour.

38. Youth groups involved in environmental protection had sprung up in schools and were tackling issues such as climate change, pollution, erosion and other environmental concerns.

39. **Mr. Poku-Bonsu** (Ghana) said that there was still too little investment in initiatives to help young people start enterprises, and that the Ghanaian private sector remained reluctant to invest in youth development programmes.

40. As volunteerism was still the most accessible type of work, young Ghanaians were asking for more logistical and financial support for their organizations, and they called on the competent United Nations bodies to facilitate exchanges among the young people of all countries.

41. Young Ghanaians wanted to participate in formulating policies and taking decisions that affected them.

42. **Mr. Covaliu** (Romania) noted with concern that, according to the International Labour Organization, youth unemployment remained alarmingly high despite the global economic expansion. Although young people currently had more opportunities for finding a decent job, many found themselves unemployed after completing their schooling, forced to accept low-paying or informal-sector jobs, in deplorable conditions and lacking access to social services and medical care. There was an urgent need for policies to facilitate young people's access to the labour market, because the problems of youth today could destabilize society tomorrow.

43. **Ms. Martin** (Romania) said that it was important to review curricula, in order to ensure that schools provided young people with the knowledge and skills required by current economic realities, and to put in place educational systems that took into account the current and future needs of youth.

44. It was also necessary to recognize the role of youth organizations in the global economy and development. Young people should engage more actively in volunteer work in their communities and thereby acquire the general skills that they needed in order to find jobs more easily.

45. Lastly, employment policies should focus on the following priorities: abolishing the worst forms of child labour; promoting youth self-employment and entrepreneurship; integrating youth employment policies into national strategies; and granting microcredits to young entrepreneurs, in order to enhance their personal development and that of the society in which they lived.

46. The youth of today were the leaders of tomorrow. They should have the chance to meet their full potential, educate themselves, defend their rights, participate actively in the decision-making process and make choices.

47. As for Romanian youth, they were very energetic and were reaping the benefits of the creation of new structures, such as the Romanian Youth Council, the National Youth Authority and the National Agency for the Support of Youth Initiatives.

48. **Mr. Mulgrave** (Jamaica), speaking as his country's youth delegate, said that the Jamaican athletes who had participated in the twenty-ninth Olympic Games in Beijing had been a source of inspiration and that, with that kind of determination, goals could be achieved, including the Millennium Development Goals.

49. While it was true that some progress had been made, it was not certain that all of the Millennium Development Goals could be achieved by 2015. The Caribbean region, for its part, was behind in its efforts and would fail to reach the Goals without the contribution of its young people.

50. It was encouraging to note that the United Nations had developed an international policy on youth, specifically the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Young people represented one fifth of the 6 billion people living in the world. Some 86 per cent of them lived in developing countries, including the Caribbean Member States. It was to be hoped that the young people of the region would be able to increase their contribution to the development of policies at the international level, considering that Jamaica was the only member State of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that had included youth delegates in its delegation to the General Assembly. The CARICOM Youth Ambassadors Programme could play a useful role in that regard.

51. He endorsed the statements made by fellow youth delegates, including those from Germany and Switzerland, and called on Member States to support the participation of young people at the United Nations, in particular by including youth delegates in their delegations.

52. Young people, who would be tomorrow's leaders, joined in the appeal by Caribbean leaders encouraging the international community to devise strategic programmes to address the particular needs of middle-income countries, with deep pockets of poverty.

53. The world was faced with specific problems that called for eclectic solutions, and the involvement of young leaders was imperative. Youth policies should be changed where necessary, youth councils should be established where there were none, technology should be used as a tool to reach the young "technocentric" generation, and social policies should stress the importance of family stability.

54. **Mr. Onderčo** (Slovakia), speaking on behalf of the youth of his country, said that, unfortunately, for many young people around the world life was poor and harsh. Young people, particularly girls, were not given the role that they should have in society. Although the importance of their participation had been recognized in the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond, they faced many difficulties when they tried to participate in society, owing, inter alia, to the perception that society had of them.

55. A case in point was that of the young people of his city, which was very traditional and conservative. The creation of a youth parliament in Prešov had enabled young people to participate in city management. It had proven that young people were not only willing to participate responsibly in decision-making, but were also able to do so.

56. The decision to allow the participation of young people not only helped to empower them politically, it also helped change the public perception of young people. As noted in the World Youth Report 2007, young people were in many cases the driving force in their countries' development.

57. The participation of young people was not limited to political organizations or organized movements. More and more young people were serving as volunteers in order to improve the situation of their countries.

58. It was regrettable that, despite the commitments undertaken, only 30 of the 193 Member States had sent youth delegates to the United Nations. It was in the interest of all to strengthen the participation of young people.

59. **Mr. Qasimli** (Azerbaijan), speaking as a youth delegate from his country, said that, for many young people, globalization had become synonymous with insecurity and heightened inequality instead of greater economic and social development. When the labour market was no longer accessible for them, they were often faced with poverty and exclusion.

60. If the goal of sustainable development was to be achieved, priority must be given to developing poverty eradication strategies. In order to enable young people to find their place in society, existing policies, partnerships and programmes should also be adapted by focusing on employment, health, gender equality and education, bearing in mind the constantly evolving markets. The international community must move beyond generalities to find solutions to immediate problems while maintaining a long-term perspective.

61. The main objective was to help young people move from dependency to self-reliance, for example, by encouraging those who wanted to set up their own business, offering them advice and providing them with start-up capital, including through microcredit programmes. Training and continuing education programmes should also be set up. Such activities would facilitate collaboration between Governments and civil society.

62. Young people should also be protected from influences that could interfere with their transition to healthy adulthood. The world had never been so rich, and yet more than 1 billion people were living in extreme poverty. The figures provided by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on education, nutrition and child health were shocking and showed that action must be taken.

63. Azerbaijan had taken measures to address the situation of young people who had been affected by the conflict with Armenia. Legislation on youth had been amended, a new State programme on education abroad had been set up to enable 5,000 students to participate, and new schools had been built in mountainous regions of the country. A youth employment summit had also been held from 24 to 27 September 2008.

64. **Ms. Shaw** (Australia) said that in her capacity as a youth representative for her country, she had met with over 5,000 young Australians from different walks of life over a period of five months. A constant theme brought up at those meetings had been the desire of young people to participate in the development of their communities. Social inclusion and civic engagement were basic tenets of democracy.

65. Young people had always sought opportunities to participate within their communities and had blazed trails where no one else had gone before. They had played a vital role in leading social movements in such areas as civil rights, women's rights and higher education and in the anti-war movement. In May 2008, Australian youth had participated in preparations for the 2020 Youth Summit and in setting up the Australian Youth Forum and had developed and administered the largest consultation of young people, in Australia.

66. Young people were not simply the leaders of tomorrow; they were also leading members of their communities today. They must be given the education and skills to enable them to protect the environment and play a role in society so as to make the world more just and promote democracy and multilateralism.

67. **Ms. Poole** (Australia) said that, as she had noticed in her travels throughout the country and in her meetings with youth delegates, young people had many things in common, such as optimism, honesty and the courage to raise questions. They knew that, in a rapidly changing world where violence and discrimination against women were systemic, and inequalities were enormous, fundamental change was needed. Climate change, for example, was very real for young Australians, as it affected them personally, especially in regions affected by drought; however, it was also an opportunity to build a more humane and sustainable global society.

68. Young people wanted to know why the question of climate change was not a priority, why ending extreme poverty was so complex, why trade agreements were respected, but targets for alleviating human suffering were not. They had questions because life on the planet depended on it. They were idealistic

because idealism was the force behind change. They wanted to hope and dream and, to be able to do so, they needed to have a voice at the international level and within United Nations agencies.

69. **Ms. Giménez-Jiménez** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that her Government's social policy focused on equality, poverty elimination, the universal and equitable exercise of human rights and social, economic and cultural rights, and increased social and public participation, in particular on the part of groups which had been traditionally marginalized, such as indigenous peoples, the poor, children and adolescents, older persons and women. With reference to the Secretary-General's report (A/63/133), she said that achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all could not be possible without universal access to basic social protection, particularly for unorganized sector workers and migrant workers.

70. The measures that her country had taken included the unanimous adoption on 16 July 2008 of a law for the social protection of housewives, which also covered migrant women, and the enactment of a law on microcredit, which guaranteed access by the poorest to credit and fostered the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises as well as the establishment of cooperatives and other social structures for production. In 2006, 31 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) had been devoted to social investment, with the largest share for education (37.5 per cent) followed by social security (26.3 per cent) and health (13.3 per cent). In the area of sustainable agricultural development, "Zamoran farms" had been created, which were individual and collective socio-productive units set up in agricultural areas reclaimed by the National Land Institute and which benefited from financial and technical support. That programme had made it possible for 1.3 million hectares of unused land to be used again between 2005 and 2006. Lastly, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had been declared free of illiteracy by UNESCO in October 2005.

71. With regard to regional cooperation, her country had launched initiatives which focused on solidarity, such as the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean (ALBA), and proposed that the Organization of American States (OAS) should adopt a social charter of the Americas for the promotion and protection of the social, economic, environmental and cultural rights of the peoples of the Americas.

72. She emphasized the need for the international community to honour its pledge to allocate 0.7 per cent of GDP to official development assistance by 2015. To that end, her Government was opposed to the selective allocation of assistance, which tended to reproduce the old colonial relationships that some donor countries maintained with recipient countries. Development was not possible under a neo-liberal economic model, which favoured the market and capital over human beings.

73. In conclusion, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela considered that social integration was key to eliminating poverty and enabled all groups in society, particularly those which were traditionally marginalized, to take full advantage of every aspect of human life. It reiterated its commitment to fight against poverty and in favour of human dignity.

74. **Mr. Amil** (Pakistan) said that the financial, food and oil crises, linked to the asymmetrical impact of globalization, the failed Doha Round negotiations and increased economic competition had created a risk of recession which required a re-examination of the global economy. The drop in official development assistance, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, increasing poverty and the fact that developing countries were marginalized from international economic decision-making processes hindered the ability to achieve fair and equitable social development.

75. It was important to reaffirm the commitments made during the 1995 World Summit for Social Development and the 2005 World Summit, namely the commitments to full employment and decent work for all. In order to achieve those objectives, it was necessary to ensure equitable international trade and equal opportunities for developing countries, whose economies were mostly based on agrarian and labour-intensive workforce. Priority should also be given to the financing of microprojects for agricultural development and the building of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Likewise, it was essential to honour the commitments made vis-à-vis official development assistance, debt relief and the transfer of technology.

76. The recently elected democratic Government of Pakistan had attached high priority to promoting employment opportunities by enhancing economic growth and the development and welfare of its people

through the empowerment of all stakeholders, particularly women. In that regard, Pakistan's Medium-Term Development Framework for 2005-2010 emphasized reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals for development so as to put in place a just and sustainable economic system.

77. Pakistan's agency for the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, which employed the bulk of the non-agricultural and partially employed workforce in Pakistan, provided support to 3.5 million SMEs all over the country. Moreover, to promote youth employment, the Government had launched a nation-wide internship programme in the public sector, involving 20,000 interns the first year, and which should benefit up to 50,000 graduates annually. Lastly, special quotas had been established for women and persons with disabilities in public sector jobs, and their employment was also encouraged in the private sector.

78. **Ms. Stewart** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the 97th session of the International Labour Conference, held in June 2008, had adopted the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization. The Declaration aimed to strengthen the capacity of ILO to support its members' efforts to promote progress and social justice, through the four strategic objectives of the Decent Work Agenda, which were interdependent. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination, following the call by more than 150 heads of State and of Government at the 2005 World Summit and the 2006 Ministerial Declaration of the Economic and Social Council, had requested the entire multilateral system to mainstream the principle of employment and decent work for all in their programmes, policies and activities. The Toolkit for Mainstreaming Employment and Decent Work was the first multilateral system-wide effort of its kind and enabled agencies and national stakeholders to more coherently and effectively achieve employment and decent work outcomes in international and national development agendas and to contribute to the United Nations reform.

79. The forthcoming publication "Global Employment Trends for Youth" showed that the number of unemployed youth had increased by 13.6 per cent from 1997 to 2007, from 63 million to 71 million. Youth made up as much as two thirds of the world's unemployed, but only one fourth of the total working-age population. An increasing number of countries were implementing national action plans on youth employment, and ILO had recently published a guide for the preparation of such plans in response to General Assembly resolutions inviting it to work together with the United Nations Secretariat, the World Bank and other United Nations entities in the framework of the Youth Employment Network. ILO was also working with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on a project to promote best practices in youth policies in Latin America and the Caribbean, and with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a project promoting productive and decent work for youth in the Mano River basin.

80. In relation to the ageing population, the 98th session of the International Labour Conference would hold a general discussion based on an integrated approach to employment and social protection issues. ILO had analysed the conditions of work and employment which could affect the willingness and capacity of older workers to look for, or remain longer in, paid employment. Its Conditions of Work and Employment Programme, in collaboration with the ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities, had developed a workplace training module which aimed to change perceptions concerning the employment of older workers.

81. The ILO Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities (Convention No. 156) was the key international labour standard for addressing conflicts between work and family responsibilities. ILO was holding tripartite meetings on the policies and action enhancing coordination to address needs of workers with family responsibilities and the needs of their employers. The ILO Convention concerning Maternity Protection (Convention No. 183), adopted in 2000, was the other key international labour standard in that area, and its implementation had made it one of the indicators of progress towards Goals 4 and 5 of the Millennium Development Goals. Governments which had not already done so were, therefore, urged to ratify that Convention. Lastly, a publication on workplace partnerships for child-care solutions drawing on case studies from nine countries at different levels of development was being finalized.

82. **Ms. Padgham** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that

volunteers played a vital role in the delivery of economic and humanitarian services in their communities. As the tenth anniversary of the International Year of Volunteers approached, she urged Governments to accept and enhance the essential role that volunteers played in the development of their countries. She was pleased to note that the United Nations Volunteers Programme, an essential partner of the Federation, was working to quantify the contribution of volunteers to the gross domestic product in developing countries. Volunteers were increasingly called upon to provide social services to disadvantaged or marginalized members of communities, ageing populations in particular, especially as Governments seemed to be reducing their commitments to the delivery of social services. At the same time, the contribution of trained volunteers to humanitarian relief had been recognized as essential.

83. There was a need to invest in the training of volunteers more than ever, given the magnitude of recent disasters and other emergencies. The Federation encouraged Governments to support its efforts to that end, including by creating favourable legislative frameworks that enhanced volunteers' potential for contributing to the development of their societies and addressed the safety and well-being of volunteers.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.